

## The Chapels Society ~ Minutes of the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

1) The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Chapels Society took place at Union Chapel, Islington, London on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2014. The President, Tim Grass, took the chair at 2.15pm and called the meeting to order. Apologies for absence had been received from Michael Atkinson, Tim & Judith Bartlett, Clyde & Noreen Binfield, Anthea & Tony Coates, Christine Denwood, Anthony Earl, John Ellis, Martin Foster, Jenny Freeman, Nigel Lemon, Michael Mackintosh, David Oldham, Edward Royle, Marianne Wakeling and Peter West.

2) The President asked if there were any corrections or amendments to the minutes of the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held in Dovedale Baptist Church, Liverpool on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2013. As no revisions were required the adoption of the minutes was unanimously agreed by the meeting and were duly signed by the President as a correct record.

3) The President (Tim Grass) noted that he did not have much to add to the information contained in the *Annual Report*. He felt that it had been an encouraging year for the Society and that there had been a series of very successful visits. He particularly commended the conviviality of the visits and observed that they provided an ideal opportunity for networking between members and for sharing ideas for future activities.

The Secretary (Sara Crofts) noted that it had been a busy year for the Society in terms of the increasing volume of incoming correspondence. She attributed this to the presence of the website and to the rising profile of the Society in the wider heritage world. The emails that she received covered a range of topics but were mostly request for advice and information about specific chapels. She was often able to provide general guidance but in other cases was able to refer the enquirer to other sources of advice. In terms of future developments, she updated members on a new website initiative that will commence soon – 'Chapel of the Month' – and asked members to please forward suggestions of places that might be featured along with a short explanation of why they are of interest.

She also noted that the Society benefited from having Michael Atkinson as its Casework Officer. Michael had been very diligent in dealing with a wide variety of casework over the last year and had provided substantial advice in relation to a number of listed building consent applications and designation applications.

The Editor (Chris Skidmore) noted that it had been a fairly quiet year for the Publications Subcommittee though he continued to enjoy editing the *Newsletter* and would welcome ideas for articles from the membership. Ideally he would be pleased to receive some scholarly articles but commented that it was also good to receive shorter, intimate items of news as well. He was always in need of volunteers to review the visits and hoped that one of the people who had taken the self-guided tour in the morning might be willing to write about their experience. Lastly, he noted that he hoped to be able to publish the older copies of the *Newsletter* on the website in due course. In the process of looking through the early editions he had been amused to read Christopher Stell's comment in the first issue that finding volunteers to undertake tasks was always a problem.

As there is currently no Visits Secretary in post the President noted that he was keeping an eye on the visits programme in the interim. Efforts are being made to find someone to take on the role from the next AGM and although we have identified one possible volunteer other people are very welcome to put themselves forward. Looking back, he felt that this visits over the last year had been exceptional but noted that the Council is always receptive to ideas for future trips. He also gave a brief update on the proposal to visit Edinburgh in May 2015. Visits to chapels in the city would be spread over two days as there are so many interesting places to explore and a particular highlight was likely to be the Mansfield Traquair Centre (formerly the Mansfield Place Catholic Apostolic Church) with its fine Phoebe Anna Traquair murals. Tim Grass also invited Christopher Wakeling to say a few words about the C20 Chapels conference to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> November in Birmingham. The conference will feature six very good speakers and might include a short walking tour too. Christopher Wakeling noted that booking forms are available on the Chapels Society's website and encouraged members to sign up as soon as possible.

The Treasurer (Jean West) gave a brief report on the state of Society's finances, which remain healthy. The visits programme continues to produce a modest surplus to support the work of the Society and there had also been a boost from the recently submitted Gift Aid claim.

The Hon President then presented the Society's *Annual Report and Accounts* to the AGM. As there were no

questions the adoption of the *Annual Report and Accounts 2013* was agreed nem con.

4) Membership rates are kept under review by the Council and there is no need for an increase at the present time. The number of members of the Society remains fairly stable although there is a need to continue to try to recruit new members whenever possible.

5) The President noted that although the post of Visits Secretary is currently vacant the Society's other Honorary Officers are willing to stand for re-election as follows:

- Secretary: Sara Crofts – proposed by Chris Skidmore, seconded by Paul Gardner
- Treasurer: Jean West – proposed by Michael Atkinson, seconded by Rod Ambler
- Editor: Chris Skidmore – proposed by Peter Ackers, seconded by Sara Crofts

The Society's Honorary Officers were elected unanimously en bloc with no objections or abstentions.

The President also confirmed that the Society currently has six elected members of Council each serving three-year terms. The meeting noted that the current Council members are willing to continue serving as follows:

- David Quick (until 2015)
- Michael Atkinson (until 2015 and then eligible for re-election)
- Rod Ambler (until 2015 and then eligible for re-election)
- Alan Rose (until 2016)
- Peter Ackers (until 2016 and then eligible for re-election)
- Jenny Freeman (until 2016 and then eligible for re-election)

The President reported that Paul Gardner currently attends meetings of the Chapels Society's Council in his capacity as Membership Secretary. He will reach the end of an initial three year appointment to this role at the end of this year but has indicated his willingness to continue. The Council had endorsed this proposal and this recommendation was supported by the meeting.

6) Dr Alexander Calder had carried out a thorough job of examining the accounts once again this year and his assistance was greatly valued by the Council. As there had been no other nominations, the President asked members if they wished the Council to reappoint Dr Calder to examine the accounts for the following year on the Council's recommendation. The meeting agreed unanimously.

7) There was no other notified business.

8) The President noted that this had been another interesting year for the Society though it was tinged with sadness due to the deaths of Christopher Stell and Andrew Worth, who had both been long standing and dedicated members of the Society. Discussions are ongoing as to how best to honour their contribution to the work of the Society. He also noted that as a result of Andrew's untimely passing the Association of Denominational Historical Societies & Cognate Libraries (ADHSCL) had been left without a Convenor and that this also meant that plans to hold a joint conference on the topic of memorialising the First World War in Nonconformist chapels had been temporarily placed on hold. Tim Grass had held discussions with Pauline Johns (ADHSCL Secretary) and Andrew Worth earlier in the year and there were plenty of good ideas for the conference but he thought it best to wait until after the ADHSCL AGM in October to progress these further. Robin Phillips urged the Council and Chapels Society members to raise awareness of the need to find a new Convenor for the ADHSCL and in response Tim Grass noted that Council members would do all everything possible to achieve an appropriate outcome.

The meeting ended at 2.50pm.

**Attendees:** John Dearing, Paul Gardner, Saskia Hallam, Chris Skidmore, Jean West, Mary Ede, Roger Holden, Stephen Duckworth, Stella Bond, Barbara Phillips, Robin Phillips, Anne Anderson, John Anderson, M G Jones, Tim Grass, Sara Crofts, Christopher Wakeling, Alan Brooks, Roger Thorne, John Anderson, Anne Anderson, Moira Ackers, Peter Ackers, Rob Ambler, Maragaret Ambler, Rosalind Kaye, Anthony Percival, Michael Pluck, Christopher Buckwell, Stuart Leadley, John Turner, Joan Turner, Anthony Richardson, John Humphries, Barry Denton, Belinda Denton, Susan Wallington, Richard Wallington.

**Guests:** Julie Witherall